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GENERAL NOTES.

It appears that all expeditions sent out to observe the total solar eclipse of October 10, 1912, in Brazil, were entirely without result, owing to a heavy rain which prevailed over the entire territory of the eclipse path on that day. Expeditions were put in the field by England, France, Germany, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile.

Professor MARY W. WHITNEY, director of Vassar College Observatory since 1888, retires on a pension of the Carnegie Foundation as Professor Emeritus of Astronomy.

The daily press records the death of Professor O. C. WENDELL, for many years a member of the staff of Harvard College Observatory and known particularly for his photometric measures of variable stars.

It is also reported that Mr. F. E. SEAGRAVE has been appointed to fill the vacancy created by Professor WENDELL'S death.

In furtherance of the plan of co-operation which has been entered into between Detroit Observatory of the University of Michigan and the observatory of the University of La Plata, Argentina, Professor W. J. HUSSEY, who is director of both institutions, left for Argentina in June, to be absent eighteen months, taking with him an extensive equipment of machine tools for the equipment of the new observatory shops at La Plata. With him went Messrs. B. P. DAWSON, H. J. COLLIAU, the Detroit Observatory instrument-maker, and P. T. DELAVAN, who was a member of the Carnegie Expedition for the observation of stellar positions in the Southern Hemisphere.

During Professor HUSSEY'S absence the Detroit Observatory is in charge of Professor R. H. CURTISS, the assistant director.

It is reported that an attempt will be made to establish an astronomical observatory on Grouse Mountain, in British Columbia.

Earthquake Predictions.—On October 1st a three-line cablegram appeared in our newspapers to the effect that the inhabitants of Valparaiso had spent most of the preceding night in the streets in fear of an earthquake. Doubtless few of our readers noticed this obscure item, but it brought back most vividly to one of the editors the very curious *sequelæ* of the great Chilean earthquake of 1906; for the psychological phenomena produced by that great *terremoto* were far stranger to him than its physical results. The D. O. Mills Observatory is on the very edge of Santiago, one thousand feet above the city, and in full view of its five hundred thousand inhabitants. To many of the lower classes in the city it seemed certain that “el astrónomo yanqui” would undoubtedly be able to tell them whether another earthquake was to be expected, and for a month no night went past without the appearance of a deputation of peones, whose ragged spokesman desired to be reassured on the question of another earthquake. To all these, and to cabled requests from other parts of Chile, the uniform answer was given that many small aftershocks, but no great shock, were to be expected. Three months before the great shock a party of jovial Germans, celebrating Bismarck Day, had set up near the observatory a sapling with a bunch of branches at the top. On the second day after the earthquake this harmless object set the lower classes in a ferment of excitement and apprehension; it was a black flag displayed by the Yankee astronomer to warn the city of its impending doom! When the full tenor of the “signal” had been explained by the captain of a squad of police sent up the hill for the purpose, the offending object was at once chopped down; but that night, with a brilliant escort of lancers, there came a communication from a high official of the government asking the meaning of the signals being displayed, and could he be furnished with a code!

Much of the apprehension of the populace came from the fact that a certain retired captain of the Chilean navy professed to be able to foretell earthquakes. The system was comprehensible only to its author, certainly not to an astronomer, for it involved mysterious magnetic effects of the planets, and depended largely upon their times of conjunction.

The number of those who attempt to predict the weather or

earthquakes from such phenomena as the conjunctions of the planets, sun-spots, "solar electric force," "magneto-electric effects of the planets," etc., is legion; but few of these prophets seem to have caused so much apprehension as in this case. The recent anxiety in Valparaiso was caused by this same earthquake predictor prophesying the probability of a great earthquake between the hours of 2 and 5 A. M. on September 30th. The broadsides of the scientists, among them the astronomer in charge of the D. O. Mills Observatory, the head of the National Observatory, and such an authority as Count MONTESSUS DE BALLORE, head of the Chilean seismological service, ridiculing these "prophecies," seem to have had little real effect, for Chilean papers lately received state that thousands of people remained in the streets all night till driven in by a heavy rain, and that there was very general relief and rejoicing when the fated three-hour period had passed without disaster.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE
ASTRONOMICAL SOCIETY OF THE PACIFIC ON NOVEMBER 30,
1912, AT 2:00 P. M., IN THE ROOMS OF THE SOCIETY.

Present: Directors CURTIS, AITKEN, TOWNLEY, COSTA, CRAWFORD, McADIE, and RICHARDSON.

The minutes of the previous meeting, as printed in the *Publications*, were approved.

The following new members were elected:—

Dr. LOUIS BAZET.

Mr. WINFIELD CASSADY.

Mr. W. R. LUDEWIG.

Miss MARY PROCTOR.

The Public Library of Los Angeles.

The Library of the University of Michigan.

On motion of TOWNLEY, seconded by AITKEN, the following resolution was adopted:—

Resolved, That the Committee on Publication may, in its discretion, grant on request, to the authors of long articles contributed to the *Publications*, not to exceed fifty (50) reprints, without covers, and the same shall be paid for by the Society.

The Committee on Publication is hereby instructed to obtain from the printers a uniform rate on reprints, with more favorable terms than those now granted.

The following communication was received from Professor A. O. LEUSCHNER, director of the Students' Observatory of the University of California:—